



## Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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### **“He Said Many Great Things” – Lincoln Quotes**

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Sometimes it may be hard for us to believe that a man who was raised on a farm in Kentucky could become the President of the United States. Abraham Lincoln, a very intelligent man, is one of our most quoted presidents the United States has ever had; he has had more books written about him than any of our other presidents.

When Abraham Lincoln was a young boy, his mother passed away and his father remarried a woman name Sarah Bush. Sarah and Abraham were very fond of one another and Sarah once said, “He was the best boy I ever saw, I never gave him a cross word in all my life.” Abraham Lincoln’s response was, “All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.” Up until the day she died, Abraham and Sarah were very close.

In 1836, Abraham Lincoln became a lawyer, and, in a letter he wrote to other lawyers, Lincoln asked them to, “Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser- in fees, and expenses, and waste of time.” Lincoln understood how necessary it is to compromise in everyday life, even though he sometimes had trouble himself.

In some notes that Lincoln prepared for some other lawyers, he recommended forming the habit of diligence. Abraham Lincoln stated, “The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.” Abraham Lincoln wanted them to be aware that hard work was a virtue.

On July 23, 1856, in Galena, Illinois, during one of Abraham Lincoln's debates with Douglas before he became president, he started talking about his plan to make slavery illegal. Abraham Lincoln said, "If you mean that it is our aim to dissolve the Union for myself, I answer, that is untrue; for those who act with me I answer, that it is untrue." Lincoln was addressing his remarks to his opponents in the Republican Party. He wanted others to know his intentions were not to make slavery illegal or to split up the Republicans and Democrats, but that he was simply doing it to make all of the slaves free.

A few years later in 1860, before becoming president, he spoke at Cooper Union in New York. Some think that if he had not given this speech, he may have never become president. Speaking from his heart Lincoln said, "As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked." Abraham Lincoln was talking about slavery and how it is an evil that should never be tolerated. Slavery is not a necessity, even though others might think differently.

A reporter once wrote about Abraham Lincoln, "Washington was a typical American, but Lincoln was a humanitarian as broad as the world. He was bigger than his country- bigger than all the presidents together." He knew that because Abraham Lincoln refused to demonize the enemy. After Robert E. Lee surrendered, those in Washington wanted Lincoln to speak. "I have always thought 'Dixie' one of the best tunes I had ever heard. Our adversaries over the way attempted to appropriate it, but I insisted that we fairly capture it."

At his last cabinet meeting Lincoln hoped there would be no persecution, no blood shed after the war. He knew, "The best way to destroy an enemy was to make a

friend of him.” Perhaps Abraham Lincoln thought this because there was no room for revenge in his soul. Maybe it was because he realized that revenge was a dangerous, two-sided weapon; maybe he found a better way to work things out.

Abraham Lincoln spoke of dying in one of his last speeches. He said, “If they kill me, the next man will be just as bad for them; and in a country like this, where our habits are simple, and must be, assassination is always possible, and will come if they are determined upon it.” A few years later, in 1865, while attending a play in the Ford Theatre at Washing D.C., our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated. Lincoln is thought to be one of the best presidents the United States has ever known, and none of us will let any American forget that fact. [From “Abraham Lincoln in Galena, Illinois.” Abraham Lincoln Online.

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/sites/galena.html>. (Nov. 19, 2008);

Nina Brown Baker, *The Story of Abraham Lincoln*; Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*; Noah Brooks, *Lincoln Observed*; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*; Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*; “Lincoln Quotes: The Best Quotations.” Griessman, Gene. <http://www.theamericans.us/Quote.html>. (Oct. 30, 2008); Stefan Lorant, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; and Philip Van Doren Stern, *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*.]